

Sweet CHALET

An easy combination of wood, stone and sky keeps life uncomplicated at Casey and Derek Zoldy's Haliburton chalet.

feature

BY WALTER FRANCYK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Life's pleasures are simple at Eagle Lake. "There's no noise," says Derek Zoldy. With no artificial light, nights are dark at his family's log cabin in the Haliburton Highlands. You can see thousands of stars. "The only sounds you hear are animals and rushing water from the falls down by the lake," he says.



Bathed in natural light, the open-concept great room is a comfortable living and entertaining space for this winter-loving family. **OPPOSITE TOP:** Each bedroom on the main floor opens on a balcony overlooking the woods. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** In the kitchen, most lower cabinets have drawers with soft, self-close slides and hinges from Blumotion. An oil-rubbed bronze finish coats the brass pulls and knobs from Lee Valley.

Derek and his wife Casey bought six acres of wooded hillside near Sir Sam's Ski & Bike Area seven years ago. Avid skiers, they first saw the area in the late 90s, when they came up for a first-aid competition for ski patrollers. "We just fell in love with it up here," says Derek, a mining engineer who designs and builds tunnels for subways, water supplies and sewer systems in Canada and the United States.

He and Casey, a teacher at an elementary school near their Newmarket home, sons John, 17, and Jacob, 13, have enjoyed many memorable skiing holidays in this peaceful hinterland. "The landscape is awe inspiring," says Casey. "The night sky is magnificent and we have spent many evenings sitting out on the decks watching the stars."

Sir Sam's is a wonderful, family-oriented place for children to experience and enjoy skiing and snowboarding, Casey says. John is a snowboard instructor while Jacob is a ski racer. "We love the area and we have lots of friends up here," says Derek.

The Zoldys spent years researching the type of home to build. They wanted a well-insulated, energy efficient house they could use in winter. "We wanted a log home," Derek says. "It was just a matter of getting the right design."

They found their design and the team they wanted at **1867 Confederation Log Homes**. "Confederation was very accommodating in terms of making the changes we wanted," Derek says. "Their design staff and sales staff were very good to deal with. We were in sync with them and they were in sync with us."

Some elements of their log home, such as the tall windows and the high, vaulted great-room ceiling, were borrowed from the floor plans of larger homes. Confederation raised the ceiling peak, making the room look larger than it is. Confederation's **Rick Kinsman** says his company's 3-D design capability allows clients to "walk through" their floor plans. "Everybody wants something different," Kinsman says. "We try to incorporate those ideas and show you what it looks like." *Continued on page 54*

RIGHT: The pine-panelled loft is the bedroom for two teenage boys. Northern Expressions supplied the matching log beds. **BELOW:** The warmth of finely finished wood imbues the home. **BOTTOM:** Windows by Laflamme Doors & Windows punctuate the log structure with practical light and beautiful views.



Meridian Credit Union provided the financing. Ann Boyle, Meridian's Aurora manager, was a great help. "Her efforts helped us get the project completed," says Derek.

Built of double tongue and groove, white pine logs with dovetailed corners, the cabin has 1,400 sq. ft. on the ground floor. "We wanted our place to be cosy and relaxing," says Casey. "The logs have such a warm and natural feel to them."

A master bedroom and guest bedroom, each with a balcony overlooking the woods, flank the main-floor great room with its granite fireplace, towering windows and open-concept kitchen.

Cottage Hill Furniture & Cabinets Inc. built the kitchen with antique white melamine cabinets. Cabinet fronts are solid cherry frames with cherry veneer panels from a Madawaska Valley mill. "The cabinets were designed to enhance the structure and to do so in an efficient manner," says Cottage Hill owner **Willy Ewaschuk**.

Upstairs, a 300 sq. ft. loft, overlooking the great room and the woods outside, serves as the boys' bedroom. The basement has a walkout to the front of the house, a large bathroom and plenty of space for a family room and future bedrooms. "Although we wanted a smaller place, we still wanted to be able to have people come up and stay and be comfortable,"

Casey says. The warmth of wood is paramount throughout the house.

The windows are probably Casey's favourite feature. "I tend to find myself walking around inside and just staring out the windows," she says. "It doesn't matter what the season is, the woods are so beautiful. You never know if you'll see deer, bears, birds or raccoons. Because there are so many windows, the cabin feels very open and spacious even though it's not overly large."

While Confederation built the home's log shell, Derek acted as general contractor. He installed drywall, finished electrical work and hired expert tradesmen to do those things he couldn't do himself. *Continued on page 56*

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RIGHT: Homeowner Derek Zoldy stores solar-powered electricity in 16 batteries in his chalet basement. **BELOW:** The touch of a button shows how much electricity is being generated. **BOTTOM:** On the back porch, Casey Zoldy once found three bears licking freshly stained furniture.



Doug Hogarth of **Hogarth Construction** excavated the site, built the driveway and installed the septic system. **Tim Winder** of **TDW Electric** did the plumbing and electrical work and helped with the drywall, flooring and trim. Exterior stonework and the fireplace were erected by **Ken Espie Masonry** while **Upper Canada Custom Woodworking** built railings and stairs to the loft and basement.

One of the Zoldys' greatest challenges was providing the home with electricity. To get power from Ontario Hydro, they would have had to install three poles, clear a right-of-way and trench a line to their home at a cost of \$42,000. Instead, they installed a solar energy system from **Canadian Solar Inc.** for about \$30,000. Their system currently generates one kilowatt of electricity, enough to power any appliances they want. They plan to expand it to two kilowatts this spring.

Derek admits going off-grid was a risk, but he's confident they made

the right choice, from a cost perspective and energy-consciousness standpoint. "Everybody is learning how to use energy wisely," he says. "On a day like today when you don't have great sunlight and potential for solar energy, we try to minimize our footprint by not keeping lights on, using natural light as much as we can." On peak days with plenty of sunshine, they try to build up electricity stored in the 16 batteries in the basement furnace room, banking it for a cloudy day.

The family also saved money by buying a propane furnace, wood burning fireplace, propane fireplace and on-demand water heater, all from a single supplier, **Napoleon Home Comfort**. "If you combine your buying power you get more bang for your dollar," says Derek. "We shopped around and made sure that we did get a good price and good equipment."

All members of the family have fond memories of their new home in the woods, overlooking Eagle Lake. *Continued on page 58*



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RIGHT: Light fixtures from Northern Expressions illuminate the dovetailed corners of the log home. **BELOW:** An antique vanity supports a contemporary vessel sink in a ground-floor bathroom. **BELOW RIGHT:** An exterior stamp identifies the log home builder.



One of Casey's most memorable moments came when she and Jacob were sitting at the table doing schoolwork. "Jacob looked up and said, 'Look Mom, a deer'. This was nothing new as we see them all the time, but then he got really excited because there was a new baby fawn with it. The back legs were still wobbly and it seemed as if it was just standing for the first time. Mom licked the baby all over while the fawn nursed for about 20 minutes. It truly was amazing," she says.

Derek, Casey, John and Jacob use their log home year-round, almost every weekend. Every day is fun, says Derek, even if it means some hard work like slogging firewood while whitetail deer watch and quietly forage for apples in an old orchard on their land. **OH**